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Holiday SPECIAL 2010

1 ONE SHOT FEB '11

6 TALES SPANNING SPACE & TIME BY TODAY'S TOP TALENT!

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ANTHRO IN SOMETIMES THE BEAR...

JOEY CAVALIERI SCRIPT
CARLO SORIANO ART & COLOR
TRAVIS LANHAM LETTERS
RACHEL GLUCKSTERN ASSOC. EDITOR
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DO NOT MOVE! SHH! SEE WHAT HAS BROKEN INTO OUR HOME!

IT COULD NOT POSSIBLY HAVE SMELLED FOOD HERE!

YOUR WORTHLESS HUSBAND HAS NOT BROUGHT HOME SO MUCH AS AN ERRANT SPARROW IN *DAYS!*

WHEN HE SEES THERE'S *NOTHING,* HE'LL MAKE *US* HIS NEXT MEAL!

I WILL NOT WAIT FOR THAT!

HA HA HA!

I WILL CHARGE!

LET IT POUNCE ON ME... I WILL SACRIFICE MYSELF SO MY FAMILY CAN RUN FOR--

--COVER?

EASY, BOY. YOU WON'T PUNCTURE ANY BEAR--OR EVEN YOUR POOR FATHER-- WITH YOUR CRUTCH!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY FRIGHTENING US ALL?

YOU SAID YOURSELF THAT YOUR DAUGHTER'S "WORTHLESS HUSBAND" HADN'T KILLED ANYTHING WORTH THE SPEAR POINT IN FAR TOO LONG.

NOW THAT THE SOLSTICE IS HERE, THAT WILL ALL CHANGE!

BY DRESSING UP IN THAT?

WHY? DO YOU WANT THEM TO MATE WITH YOU SO THAT THE WOODS WILL BE PLENTIFUL WITH BEAR, EVEN IN THE DEAD OF THE SEASON OF COLD?

YOU'RE FAR TOO UGLY FOR THAT TO WORK! HOW DO YOU EXPECT TO PROVIDE A SOLSTICE CELEBRATION DINNER IF YOU SCARE THEM ALL AWAY?

IT'S NOT FOR YOU TO KNOW, OLD WOMAN... UNLESS YOU THINK YOU CAN TALK A BEAR TO DEATH.

PICK UP THAT ANIMAL SKIN AND LET US GO, SON...

...WHILE I STILL HAVE THE LAST WORD. IT'S AS RARE AS GAME IN FROST.

WOULD IT HAVE REALLY DONE ANY HARM TO TELL THEM ABOUT THE FALSE HUNT RITUAL?

DO YOU THINK YOUR OLD MAN IS THAT STUPID? THEN THEY WOULD WANT TO WITNESS IT, AND THAT WOULD DRAIN THE MAGIC OUT OF IT...

WOMEN! TRULY, IT IS STATED, YOU CAN WALK WITH THEM, BUT YOU CANNOT WALK WITHOUT THEM.

AT THE *SOLSTICE*, THE MIDPOINT OF THE SEASON OF COLD, THE MEN OF MY TRIBE--GREAT HUNTERS ALL--PERFORM THE *RITUAL* OF THE *FALSE HUNT*, A CEREMONY THAT BRINGS THEM GOOD FORTUNE AND ROBS OUR PREY OF ITS *POWER!*

THEN... *THIS* IS WHAT WILL MAKE ME A GREAT HUNTER LIKE YOU AND ANTHRO!

THIS CEREMONY WILL BE MY FIRST!

LART--*SON*--THE RITE WILL BE ATTENDED BY US *ALONE.*

WE NEED YOU, THAT IS, THE *WOMEN* NEED YOU TO *PROTECT* THEM. *WATCH OVER* THEM!

NO, WE WANT YOU TO RISE TO BEING THE *MAN* OF THE *FAMILY*--ITS *PROTECTOR* WHILE WE ARE GONE. WHAT IF A *REAL BEAR* SHOWED UP?

WE NEED YOU TO BE READY FOR *ANYTHING.* CAN YOU?

WILL... WILL YOU BRING ME SOMETHING *BACK?*

YOU HAVE *NO CONFIDENCE* IN MY ABILITY TO HUNT! YOU WANT ME TO STAY HOME WITH THE *WOMEN* FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE!

A *CHILD* ASKS THAT... NOT A *MAN* WE ENTRUST WITH KEEPING OUR *HOME SAFE!*

IF YOU *ACCEPT* THIS *RESPONSIBILITY*, THEN MAYBE YOU WILL RECEIVE A *REWARD.*

THE *GODS* OF THE *SOLSTICE* WILL *RECOGNIZE* WHAT YOU'VE DONE AND *BESTOW* A *GIFT!* IT IS THEIR TIME OF *MIRACLES*, AFTER ALL!

YOU ARE NOT JUST SAYING THAT TO KEEP ME AWAY FROM YOU?

I... I GUESS I CAN DO AS YOU ASK, THEN... IF YOU ARE REALLY *TELLING THE TRUTH.*

NICE ONE, IDIOT. YOU GOT HIM TO *RETURN*, BUT WHY DID YOU PROMISE HIM SOMETHING NO ONE CAN *DELIVER?*

IT WILL BE A *MIRACLE* IF WE CAN FIND OURSELVES *DINNER*, LET ALONE SOME GODLY *GIFT.*

YOU THINK YOU ARE *PROTECTING* HIM FROM THE *BLUNT TRUTHS* OF *LIFE* AND HIS *CONDITION.*

BUT HIS *DISAPPOINTMENT* ON OUR *RETURN* WILL ONLY HURT HIM *ALL THE MORE.* YOU HAVE A *LOT* TO *LEARN.*

I NEVER SAID *OTHERWISE.*

STILL, IT IS *SOLSTICE*, AND ANYTHING IS *POSSIBLE.*

HOW LONG DOES *ANTHRO* THINK I WILL LISTEN TO HIS GOODNIGHT STORIES? "GODS OF SOLSTICE WILL BESTOW A *GIFT!*" "IT IS A *TIME* OF *MIRACLES!*"

STILL, MAYBE HE IS NOT LYING.

NO, IT IS A LIE TO SPARE MY FEELINGS--TO MAKE ME FEEL *GOOD* ABOUT STAYING *BEHIND.* THE TWO OF THEM THINK I WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO...

...*HUNT!*

AT--=*Puff*=
LAST!

SEE... THIS DETAILS THE RITE OF THE FALSE HUNT IN ALL ITS GLORY!

IT WAS GIVEN TO ME BY MY *FATHER*... WHO GOT IT FROM *HIS* FATHER! THE RITE IS AS OLD AS *TIME*, AS OLD AS *EARTH!*

WHO *FASHIONED* IT?

I CANNOT SAY. SUCH CRAFT WAS *LOOKED DOWN* UPON AS *UNSEEMLY* FOR *MEN.*

HO! *THE GODS HAVE PROVIDED MEAT FOR US AFTER ALL!*

MAN-EATERS!

THAT TRIBE IS SAID TO EAT *HUMAN FLESH!*

FOR *REAL?* DO THEY JUST LET THAT STORY SPREAD TO MAKE THEM SEEM MORE FEARSOME?

IT WORKS!

EVEN IF IT IS JUST A *TALE,* THEY *OUTNUMBER* US AND WILL FLAY US IF WE HAVE NOTHING FOR THEM TO *STEAL!*

OUTNUMBER US? MAYBE NOT. HELP ME.

WHAT IS YOUR IDEA?

FIGHT FEAR WITH FEAR. WE NEED REINFORCEMENTS. HURRY.

YOU CAN DO THIS FASTER THAN *I* CAN. *YOUR* HANDS, AT LEAST, ARE COVERED!

THIS WILL BE HIS *SPEAR!*

...AND THESE RED ROCKS WILL BE HIS TERRIFYING *GLARE,* WITH WHICH HE CONSUMES HIS ENEMIES!

I THOUGHT THAT SUCH CRAFT WAS *LOOKED DOWN* UPON AS *UNSEEMLY* FOR *MEN.*

STILL... DO NOT GROW TOO *SATISFIED.* WE NEED *MORE.*

WENT BACK TO THE *CAVE* TO GET MY *WEAPONS*, WITHOUT *MOM* SEEING.

BUT *STILL* HE DID NOT *MOVE*. PERHAPS HE *REALIZES* THE ICE MAY BE *FRAGILE!*

NO! HE'S *SEEN* ME! EVEN THE *ICE* WON'T KEEP HIM FROM--

CRA-AAA-ACK

DO YOU REALLY THINK THIS WILL WORK?

SEE FOR YOURSELF!

AN ARMY OF REINFORCEMENTS! WHERE DID THEY *COME* FROM?

THEY MUST HAVE BEEN LYING IN WAIT FOR US ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN!

THOSE TWO IDIOTS UP THERE WERE JUST BAIT FOR AN *AMBUSH!*

RUN AWAY!! RUN AWAY!!

GOOD WORK, SON. LET ME GET THE ANIMAL SKIN AND WE CAN BEGIN THE FALSE HUNT RITE IN *PEACE!*

AH, HERE IT-- OOP!

FATHER!!

HELLLLLP!

I'M HELPING... I THINK!

THIS WOULD BE A GREAT SPORT...

...IF I WERE NOT FRIGHTENED OUT OF MY WITS!

DAAAAAD!!

A BOY NEEDS HIS FATHER!

SWISSSSHH

WE ALL SCORED DIRECT HITS!

THANKS TO LART'S RESOURCEFULNESS!

IT'S *HE* WHO STALKED IT AND BROUGHT THE SPEARS AND VINES AFTER ALL!

THIS WILL MAKE QUITE A *SOLSTICE FEAST!*

WE CAN *SLIDE* THIS BEAST HOME ON THE *ICE!*

HEY, *ANTHRO!* WHAT HAVE YOU GOT *THERE?*

"IT WAS GIVEN TO ME BY MY *FATHER*... WHO GOT IT FROM *HIS* FATHER! IT IS AS OLD AS *TIME*, AS OLD AS *EARTH!*"

IT'S MY SOLSTICE GIFT!!

THE GODS HAD FAITH IN MY HUNTING ABILITIES EVEN WHEN YOU AND *DAD* DIDN'T!

THANK YOU, SON!

SOLSTICE? OH, *NO!* I FORGOT!

THEY GOT ME THIS JACKET TO COMMEMORATE MY FIRST SUCCESSFUL HUNT, AND TO *REWARD* ME FOR *BEING GOOD!* THIS IS THE *BEST SOLSTICE EVER!*

YES... AND SINCE IT WILL BE COLD AT THE *NEXT* SOLSTICE, YOU CAN WEAR IT AGAIN THEN...

BUT *NEXT SOLSTICE*, I WILL BE SO GOOD THAT I WILL EARN *ANOTHER SOLSTICE GIFT!*

FOR I AM LART, MIGHTIEST OF ALL HUNTERS!!

SEE WHAT YOU STARTED?

WHAT CAN I SAY? I HAVE A YEAR TO WORRY ABOUT *NEXT SOLSTICE'S GIFT.*

AFTER ALL, THE *SOLSTICE* IS A TIME OF *MIRACLES*... *ANYTHING* IS *POSSIBLE!*

END

JONAH HEX IN: GUIDING LIGHT

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CALIFORNIA. YEAR OF 1865. DAY ONE.

PAST MIDNIGHT. TELL ME, AVRAM, DO YOU KNOW WHAT DAY HAS ARRIVED?

OF COURSE I DO, PAPA. IT'S THE FIRST DAY OF CHANUKAH.

YES, AND ALSO THE FIRST CHANUKAH SINCE YOUR BAR MITZVAH, IS IT NOT?

IT IS. I'M FINALLY TOO OLD FOR GELT COINS THIS YEAR.

HAHA, "TOO OLD" INDEED. WHEN I WAS SO YOUNG I REMEMBER FEELING DISAPPOINTED.

BUT THEN MY FATHER PLACED THIS BOX IN MY HANDS, AND I COULD NOT HELP BUT FEEL CHEERED.

WHAT'S IN IT?

YOUR LOOKING IS BETTER THAN MY EXPLAINING.

THESE COINS... SOME OF THEM LOOK POSITIVELY ANCIENT!

SOME OF THEM ARE. AND NOW THEY'RE YOURS UNTIL--

STAND UP N' TURN AROUND, Y'ALL!

KID, KEEP YER EYES ON ME. RABBI, EYES ON M'BROTHER. ONE GLANCE ELSEWHERE N' YER BRAINS'LL BE ALL OVER TH' DAMN DIRT!

JES' TELL ME WHERE TH' CASH IS AT, AN NUTHIN' MORE. UNDERSTOOD?

PERFECTLY. THERE'S A PURSE IN THE BACK OF MY WAGON. TAKE ANYTHING YOU WANT, BUT--

NUTHIN' MORE! LARRY, CHECK IT OUT.

THINK AH FOUND IT, BARRY, BUT THERE AIN'T MUCH IN HERE. NOT FER A TRIP TA SUTTER'S MILL, LEASTWAYS.

SO YA LIED T'ME.

KA-BLAM

LISSEN UP, BOY. THIS HERE TRAIL LEADS TA SUTTER'S MILL, AN' FOLKS ONLY GO THERE TA BUY GOLD. MAKE TH' RIGHT CHOICE. DON' BE NO FOOL.

KLIK-KLAK

PAPA!!!

NO! PLEASE--

NOT AN OUNCE O' WIT.

KA-BLAM

LATER.

...HURGGH...

I'M SORRY, PAPA. I...I WISH I KNEW THE RIGHT PRAYERS FOR YOU.

I NEED TO GET MOVING WHILE I CAN...BUT I SWEAR TO YOU I'LL GET THOSE COINS BACK. I DON'T CARE WHAT IT TAKES.

BESIDES THAT, ALL I CAN DO IS SAY GOODBYE AND LEAVE YOU WITH A LITTLE LIGHT.

DAY TWO.

DAY THREE.

SOMEONE, PLEASE! TELL JOHN SUTTER... *Huff*...THAT KALEB KANE'S SON IS HERE!

SURE THING, KID!

AVRAM...? WHAT HAPPENED, WHERE'S YOUR FATHER?

I LEFT HIM...HE'S DEAD. TWIN BROTHERS ROBBED US ON THE TRAIL...

PROBABLY THE TURNER BOYS. HEARD THEY WAS NEARBY.

HE NEEDS A DOCTOR. ANYONE KNOW WHERE THAT OLD COOT IS HIDING?

BY NOW? MEDICATIN' HIMSELF, NO DOUBT.

TIME FOR A BREAK, DOC, GOT SOME WORK FOR YA!

SO HE HASN'T LEFT TOWN YET? EXCELLENT.

Sigh! NOT HERE. THAT UGLY BASTARD WITH THE CONFEDERATE JACKET JUST TOOK THE LAST ROOM.

GIT OUTTA HERE!

TOK TOK

SIR, THE DOCTOR NEEDS YOUR BED AND I HAVE URGENT BUSINESS TO DISCUSS!

BED'S OCCUPIED... N' SO'M AH!

SIR, I DEMAND--

MAKE IT QUICK OR AH WILL.

I'M DOUBLING THE POSTED REWARD ON THE NOTORIOUS TURNER TWINS, MR. HEX. IF YOU'RE INTERESTED, YOU'LL STEP ASIDE AND ALLOW THIS BOY TO LIE DOWN.

Hmph! APRIL, BE A DARLIN' AN' HELP TH' GOOD DOCTOR.

THANK YOU, MR. HEX. THE TWINS MURDERED MY COUSIN TWO NIGHTS AGO. ONCE HE RECOVERS, HIS SON HERE CAN SHOW YOU WHERE IT HAPPENED.

THAT'D BE MIGHTY USEFUL. ANYTHIN' ELSE AH NEED TA KNOW?

DON'T WORRY, KID. WOMEN LOVE MEN WITH SCARS.

REALLY...?

DAY FIVE.

AH DON'T BELIEVE THIS. BLASTED CAMPFIRE'S BACK, TAKE A LOOK.

WHUT? HOW?! WE DONE DOUSED TH' THING FOUR NIGHTS IN A ROW!

ALL YA HAD TA DO WAS KILL TH' RUNT WHEN YA HAD TH' CHANCE.

C'MON NOW, YOU SEEN HIM FALL CLEAR AS AH DID!

AN' YOU SEEN HIS FIRE COME BACK EVERY NIGHT CLEAR AS ME...

...NOW GIT MOVIN' WHILE WE STILL KNOW WHERE HE'S AT.

WHY CAN'T WE GO SELL HIS COINS INSTEAD...? SHORE COULD USE A WHORE N' SOME WHISKEY...

DAY SIX.

I SHOULD APOLOGIZE AHEAD OF TIME, MR. HEX. I...DIDN'T BURY MY PAPA WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE.

CAN'T HOLD THET AGAINST YA. YOU WAS TOO HURT, ELSE AH WOULDN'T HAVE WAITED SO LONG FER YA TA HEAL.

I KNOW. IT'S JUST THAT I WISH THAT I COULD HAVE DONE BETTER FOR HIM. I MEAN, WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE FOR YOUR FATHER?

...LEFT HIM THERE TA ROT, IF'N YER SO CURIOUS. HE WOULDN'T DESERVE NO BETTER.

TIMES LIKE THET, WE EACH DO WHUT'S RIGHT FER OURSELVES.

DAY SEVEN.

THIS'LL NEVER END, WILL IT?

NOT UNTIL WE PUT TH' DURNED KID IN TH' GROUND.

AH DON' EVEN FIGGER HOW HE'S STILL ALIVE, LET ALONE HOW HE KEEPS SLIPPIN' AWAY.

HE CAN'T HAVE GONE FAR. WE'LL FIND HIM THIS TIME.

FWOOSH

DID YOU SEE THAT, MR. HEX?!

SEE WHUT?

THE CAMPFIRE...

...IT WAS DARK AND NOW SUDDENLY IT'S ALL AFLAME!

EYES ARE PLAYIN' TRICKS ON YA. IF THERE'S A FIRE BURNIN' THET MEANS THERE'S SOMEONE NEARBY. LIKE AS NOT IT'LL BE YER ROBBERS.

YA COMIN' WITH ME TA TRACK 'EM, OR YA STAYIN' WITH TH' HORSES?

I'M GOING WITH YOU. I HAVE A PROMISE TO KEEP WHEN YOU FIND THOSE ROTTEN SCALAWAGS.

#&^%$!!! IT'S TH' CAMPFIRE AGAIN!

NAW! IT CAN'T BE! IT JES CAN'T BE!

Y'ALL SOUND AWFULLY PEEVED.

TURNER TWINS, RIGHT?

LARRY N' BARRY?

JONAH HEX?! OH, SH--

AH'LL TAKE THET AS A "YES."

BLAM BLAM BLAM

YAAAHH!!

TELL ME SOMETHIN', LARRY OR BARRY. WHY DIDN'T YOU BURY THE RABBI IF YOU WAS GONNA SET UP CAMP BY HIS WAGON?

IT'S NOT US, IT'S A KID! EVERY NIGHT HE LIGHTS TH' DAMN CAMPFIRE, BUT WE CAN'T NEVER FIND HIM!

HE MUST BE TALKING ABOUT ME. EXCUSE ME FOR A SECOND.

JUST NEEDED TO GRAB MY COIN COLLECTION. CARRY ON, MR. HEX.

YER NOT GONNA KILL ME, ARE YA SIR? AH'M WORTH TWICE AS MUCH ALIVE!

SO WHUT? THERE'S TWO O' YA.

BLAM

DAY EIGHT.

TELL ME, AVRAM, HOW'D YA KEEP RESETTIN' YER CAMPFIRE?

SEEMS TA ME WE MIGHT NEVER HAVE FOUND TH' TWINS WITHOUT IT LEADIN' EM' BACK HERE EVERY NIGHT.

I WAS WITH APRIL AND THE DOCTOR MOST OF THE TIME. IT HAD TO HAVE BEEN A MIRACLE.

BAH! AIN'T NO SUCH THING AS MIRACLES, JES' RESOURCEFUL MEN. SOMEONE LOOKIN' OUT FER YA, MAYBE?

HAHA, "SOMEONE" INDEED.

BUT I'M NO RABBI, SO ALL I CAN REALLY SAY FOR CERTAIN IS THAT LIGHT GUIDES US ALL WHERE WE NEED TO BE. ESPECIALLY DURING CHANUKAH.

WELL, DON'T COUNT MAH OPINION FER MUCH, BUT AH THINK YOU'D MAKE A FINE RABBI.

FINE ENOUGH TA DO WHUT'S RIGHT.

THIS IS A HEBREW PRAYER BOOK...WHERE DID YOU GET THIS?

JOHN SUTTER GAVE IT TA ME. TOLD ME YOU'D NEED IT.

I DO. THANK YOU, MR. HEX.

〈GOD OF MERCY WHO DWELLS ON HIGH, GRANT PERFECT REST ON THE WINGS OF YOUR DIVINE PRESENCE, AND SHINE AS THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE HEAVENS...〉

DEDICATED IN LOVING MEMORY OF JOHN ALBANO SR. AND JOHN ALBANO JR. TWO OF DC'S FINEST.

PLANET HATHOR
SPACE SECTOR 2809

HONOR-
LANTERN *JOHN*
STEWART!

JOHN
WILL DO.

YOU'RE
THE ROOKIE
WHO SENT THE
DISTRESS
CALL?

AFFIRMATIVE.
I RECEIVED MY RING
ONLY DAYS AGO, AND I
AM CONDUCTING MY INITIAL
SWEEP OF THE
SECTOR.

WHAT I *FOUND*
HERE ON HATHOR
IS...WELL...IT IS A BIT
BEYOND MY
EXPERIENCE.

I SEE
WHAT YOU
MEAN...

WHEN DID THIS START?

THREE DAYS AGO.

GREEN LANTERN IN HOLY DAY

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HEY, YOU NOTICE HOW THEY'RE NOT REALLY GOING AT IT *FULL FORCE?* I MEAN, THERE'S PLENTY OF ACTION, BUT NO MASS *CASUALTIES...*

...THIS IS MORE LIKE A CITYWIDE *MOSH PIT*--NOT THAT THEY HAVE *SLAM-DANCING* WHERE YOU COME FROM.

RING: SCAN THEIR *VITAL SIGNS.*

ALL SUBJECTS FUNCTIONING WITHIN ACCEPTABLE PARAMETERS--INJURIES LIMITED TO MINOR CONTUSIONS AND LACERATIONS.

YOU MEAN THIS IS ALL FOR *SHOW?!* I WAS *THIS* CLOSE TO STARTING A FULL-SCALE *ANTI-RIOT* OPERATION!

THANK ELVON I CALLED YOU IN, JOHN!

"ELVON," HUH? AND WHO DO THESE *HATHORIANS* PRAY TO?

THEY DO NOT DISCUSS RELIGION WITH OUTSIDERS. WHY DO YOU ASK?

BECAUSE THIS WHOLE SCENE REMINDS ME OF AN EXPERIENCE I HAD BACK WHEN I SERVED IN A *DIFFERENT* CORPS...

"I WAS *YOUNGER* THEN, ON ONE OF MY FIRST FOOT-PATROLS IN BAGHDAD WHEN WE STOPPED FOR A PROCESSION CELEBRATING THE SHI'A HOLIDAY *ASHURA.*

"OF COURSE, CELEBRATING ISN'T EXACTLY THE RIGHT WORD FOR IT.

"ALL UP AND DOWN THE AVENUE, MEN WERE *SLICING* THEIR OWN SCALPS WITH RITUAL SWORDS AND FLAILING THEIR BACKS WITH RAZOR-TIPPED CHAINS.

"I'D *EXPECTED* ROADSIDE BOMBS, ROCKET-PROPELLED GRENADES AND THE REST OF IT, BUT *THIS* KIND OF BLOODSHED COMPLETELY FLOORED ME...!"

IF YOU'RE GONNA *PUKE,* STEWART, DON'T DO IT AT THEIR PARADE.

...

...WHY ARE THEY *DOING* THIS, SERGEANT MAJOR?

TODAY'S THE *DAY OF ASHURA.* THEY'RE COMMEMORATING A BATTLE 1300 YEARS AGO IN WHICH THE *GRANDSON OF MUHAMMAD* DIED.

HIS DEATH LED TO THE BIG SPLIT BETWEEN *SHI'A* AND *SUNNI* MUSLIMS, WHO ARE *STILL* FIGHTING EACH OTHER, IN CASE YOU DIDN'T NOTICE.

ANYHOW, THE SHI'A THROW THIS SHINDIG EVERY YEAR SO THEY CAN PERSONALLY *FEEL* THE SUFFERING OF A GUY THEY CONSIDER A HOLY *MARTYR.*

SHH! "MARTYR." THAT WORD GETS THROWN AROUND TOO MUCH.

I MEAN, WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE ACTUALLY TAKE *PRIDE* IN SOMETHING LIKE THIS?

NORMAL PEOPLE, STEWART.

LET ME TELL YA ABOUT SOMETHING I SAW BACK WHEN I WAS A LANCE CORPORAL IN THE *PHILIPPINES...*

"I HAD A *FRIEND* THERE--A LOCAL MECHANIC NAMED *REYNALDO* WHO HELPED ME OUT OF A JAM WHEN MY CAR BROKE DOWN ON MY WAY TO MANILA.

"HE ENDED UP SHOWING ME ALL THE BEST PLACES TO EAT, ALL THE BEST BARS IN OLONGAPO CITY...DUDE HAD MORE GIRLFRIENDS THAN I COULD KEEP TRACK OF...

ANYHOW, A FEW MONTHS LATER HE INVITES ME TO THE LOCAL *EASTER PARADE.*

NOW, I'D HEARD TALK ABOUT THE *JESUS REENACTORS* AT THESE THINGS--WEARING CROWNS OF THORNS, AND *CRUCIFYING* THEMSELVES TILL THEY'RE HALF-DEAD.

"I FIGURED THEY WERE *NUT-JOBS* AND REYNALDO HAD INVITED HIS JAR-HEAD BUDDY SO HE COULD *LAUGH* AT MY REACTION.

"AND THEN I *FOUND* HIM... STRAPPED UP ON ONE OF THOSE CROSSES.

"HE'D INVITED ME BECAUSE HE WANTED TO SHARE SOMETHING *SACRED* WITH HIS BEST FRIEND.

"AND I GOT TO THINKING THAT MAYBE *NONE* OF THESE FOLKS WERE CRAZY--THAT THERE'S JUST SOME THINGS YOU DON'T PASS JUDGMENT ON."

THE SERGEANT MAJOR DIDN'T HAVE TO SAY ANY MORE.

HE KNEW HE'D GOTTEN THE WHEELS TURNING IN MY HEAD.

SEE THIS *SYMBOL?* IT STANDS FOR THE HOLIEST MAN WHO EVER LIVED, IN MY OPINION. BUT THE CROSS IS ALSO WHAT *KILLED* HIM.

YOU MIGHT THINK IT'S *MORBID* TO REVERE AN INSTRUMENT OF TORTURE, BUT YOU'D BE MISSING THE POINT, JUST LIKE I MISUNDERSTOOD ALL THAT BLOOD ON THE DAY OF ASHURA.

NOW TELL ME WHAT THIS OVERGROWN STREET FIGHT IS SUPPOSED TO SYMBOLIZE. SHOULD BE A CINCH FOR A *TELEPATH...*

THAT IS WHAT NON-TELEPATHS ALWAYS THINK, BUT READING A STRANGER'S MIND CAN BE LIKE STICKING YOUR FINGER IN A POWER SOCKET.

IT IS ONE THING TO RISK MIND-TO-MIND CONTACT WITH A NOBLE GREEN LANTERN, BUT WITH *THESE* SAVAGES...?

YOU BETTER *TRY,* BECAUSE TREATING THIS LIKE A *RIOT* MIGHT ONLY MAKE THINGS TEN TIMES *WORSE.*

THERE'S A *GOOD* REASON THE MARINES NEVER INTERFERED WITH THE DAY OF ASHURA.

OH...

...OH, MY...

THEY DO THIS EVERY YEAR...TO *REMIND* THEMSELVES OF THE VIOLENCE THEY SWORE TO LEAVE BEHIND.

THIS RITUALIZED COMBAT... IT ACTUALLY *REINFORCES* THEIR AVERSION TO WARFARE--!

THANK YOU, HONOR LANTERN JOHN STEWART! MY *APOLOGIES* FOR WASTING YOUR TIME TODAY!

NOT AT ALL, ROOKIE. YOU'RE DOING *FINE*...

...I ONLY WISH *EVERY* CRISIS COULD BE RESOLVED LIKE THAT...

...AND THAT *MY* PEOPLE COULD LOOK INTO EACH OTHER'S HEARTS AS EASILY.

END

SUPERMAN in HERO of HEROES

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I HAVE TO SAY, CHET--- THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST MEMORABLE *THANKSGIVING DAY PARADES* WE'VE HAD IN YEARS.

YOU'RE RIGHT, LYNN. THE CROWDS ARE LARGER, THE SUN IS OUT DESPITE ITS BEING THE END OF NOVEMBER, AND THESE NEW *BALLOONS* ARE INCREDIBLE.

BUT THE REAL QUESTION ON EVERYONE'S MIND TODAY IS: WHO WILL WIN THE *CENTENNIAL PARK HERO AWARD?*

AS YOU KNOW, THE *HERO AWARD* IS THE *DAILY PLANET*-SPONSORED AWARD PRESENTED ANNUALLY TO THE HERO WHO EMBODIES THE SPIRIT OF SELFLESS GIVING.

I WONDER WHO GETS IT THIS YEAR?

WELL, REGARDLESS OF WHICH HERO GETS THE AWARD, IT SHOULD BE QUITE THE CEREMONY FOR ALL TO ENJOY. IN OTHER NEWS--

SO, WHAT DO *YOU* THINK, RON? PERSONALLY, I SAY IT'S GONNA BE *BLACK LIGHTNING.*

NEVER HAPPEN, JIMMY.

WHY NOT? HE'S CUTE. AND THAT OUTFIT HE WEARS IS *HOT!*

HE'S A LOCAL *STREET* HERO. AND HISTORICALLY, THE AWARD HAS ALWAYS GONE TO SOMEONE MORE *HIGH PROFILE.*

IF I WAS A BETTING MAN, I'D SAY THE *FLASH.*

AND I THINK WE ALL KNOW WHO *LOIS* THINKS SHOULD WIN.

DON'T GO THERE, CAT.

MARRIED OR NOT, YOU STILL HAVE A *SOFT SPOT* FOR THE *BLUE BOY.*

GREEN LANTERN HAS DONE WELL THIS YEAR. THEY'RE EVEN MAKING A MOVIE ABOUT HIM.

WITH RYAN REYNOLDS, RIGHT? TALK ABOUT *HOT*-- CAN'T WAIT TO SEE HIM IN THAT!

IT'S NOT LIKE HE DOESN'T DESERVE IT.

SO WHO SHOULD THE AWARD GO TO? WONDER WOMAN?

NOPE. SHE WON IT *LAST* YEAR.

MAYBE RON WAS RIGHT. IT *COULD* BE THE *FLASH?*

NOT A FLASH-FAN.

POLICE

I GOT IT-- *BATMAN.*

WHAT?? GET OUT OF HERE!

C'MON. DON'T EVEN TELL ME YOU DON'T THINK HE'S A HERO??

ALL THE CRAZINESS HE HAS TO DEAL WITH IN GOTHAM-- I'M SURPRISED HE DOESN'T GET THIS AWARD *EVERY* YEAR.

I DON'T KNOW, CAT. BATMAN'S KIND OF A P.R. LIABILITY.

THINK, CAT. HOW WOULD THEY EVEN *FIND* HIM?

GOOD POINT.

THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING TO THE 4TH ANNUAL ***HEROES AWARD,*** SPONSORED BY OUR GOOD FRIENDS AT THE DAILY PLANET.

IT REPRESENTS HOW THANKFUL WE ARE FOR THE HEROES WHO SAVE THE WORLD TIME AND TIME AGAIN.

NOW, I HAD PLANNED FOR A ***SPECIAL GUEST*** THIS YEAR, BUT HE SEEMS TO BE A BIT--

HERE I AM, MADAME MAYOR!

SORRY, I'M LATE BUT THERE WAS A VOLCANO IN INDONESIA--

NO PROBLEM AT ALL, SUPERMAN. JUST IN THE NICK OF TIME.

I *KNEW* IT.

HASN'T HE WON ENOUGH AWARDS??

HE *IS* THE BEST.

THANK YOU, MAYOR FLEMING.

I'M NOT USUALLY GOOD AT MAKING PUBLIC SPEECHES, BUT THIS IS A VERY *SPECIAL* OCCASION FOR ME.

WHEN I FIRST EMBARKED ON MY JOURNEY AS "SUPERMAN," I FOUND MYSELF SEARCHING THE WORLD FOR WHAT IT *REALLY* MEANT TO BE A HERO.

AFTER ALL, FOR MOST OF US, IT'S SOMEONE WE LOOK UP TO AND ADMIRE...

...SOMEONE WHO CAN DO *MORE* THAN WE CAN...OR MAYBE JUST DO IT ON A *LARGER SCALE.*

AND BY THAT DEFINITION WE RUN ACROSS MANY HEROES IN OUR EVERY-DAY LIVES.

SOME LOOK AT SPORTS FIGURES WHOSE AMAZING ATHLETIC SKILL AND COMPETITIVE PROWESS MAKE THEM THE ENVY OF MOST.

OTHERS FIND THEIR HEROES IN THOSE WHO FIGHT FOR THE RIGHTS OF *LIBERTY* AND *FREEDOM* FOR ALL.

WE ALSO LOOK AT THE COURAGEOUS *POLICE OFFICERS,* WHO FACE DANGER DAY-IN AND DAY-OUT KEEPING OUR STREETS SAFE FROM CRIME...

...OR OUR BRAVE *FIREFIGHTERS,* WHO TIRELESSLY RISK THEIR LIVES FOR STRANGERS.

I'M ALSO REMINDED OF OUR BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN IN THE *MILITARY* WHO FACE ALL MANNER OF CONFLICT AND TERROR TO KEEP OUR COUNTRY--AND EVEN THE WORLD-- SAFE FROM THOSE WHO WOULD DO IT HARM.

AND, OF COURSE THERE ARE THE MANY METAHUMANS I'VE BATTLED BESIDE...WHO ARE ALSO WORTHY OF SUCH AN HONOR.

ALL THOSE I JUST MENTIONED ARE HEROES IN THE TRUEST SENSE OF THE WORD.

BUT WITH THAT SAID, THERE IS A "HERO OF HEROES" I HAVE A *SPECIAL* ADMIRATION FOR.

A TYPE OF HERO THAT EVEN A SUPERMAN MUST STAND IN AWE OF. THAT KIND OF HERO IS EMBODIED---

--IN A BOY NAMED *ALEX MONROE.*

ALEX WOKE UP TO A SMELL OF SMOKE IN HIS APARTMENT...

...AND QUICKLY SAVED HIS SISTER SABINA AND HIS LITTLE BROTHER BRYCE.

BUT NOT BEFORE HE RECEIVED *THIRD DEGREE BURNS* OVER MORE THAN *FIFTY PERCENT* OF HIS BODY.

ALEX'S ONLY SUPER-POWERS WERE THE HEART AND THE COURAGE THAT GOD GAVE HIM TO SACRIFICE HIMSELF FOR THE LIVES OF HIS FAMILY.

WHEN I HEARD HIS STORY, IT BROUGHT A TEAR TO MY EYE.

HE SHOWED ME--HE SHOWED ALL OF US--THAT THE ONLY "POWER" YOU REALLY NEED TO HAVE IS THE POWER TO ACT WHEN YOU ARE NEEDED.

YOU WANT TO HONOR A *TRUE* HERO?

THEN HONOR ALEX.

THANKS, SUPERMAN!

GO, ALEX!

GO, ALEX!

GO, ALEX!

NO, ALEX-- THANK YOU!

NOW... TO MAKE THIS OCCASION COMPLETE...

...I HAVE A VERY SPECIAL *GIFT* FOR A *VERY SPECIAL* YOUNG MAN.

ALEX--

--YOU WILL ALWAYS BE THE *GREATEST* HERO--

--I'LL EVER KNOW!

ALEX! ALEX! ALEX!

END

THE SPECTRE IN THE GIFT

DARA NARAGHI--WRITER
TOM DERENICK & NORM RAPMUND--ARTISTS
TRAVIS LANHAM--LETTERER
CHRIS BECKETT--COLORIST
RACHEL GLUCKSTERN--ASSOC. EDITOR
MIKE CARLIN--EDITOR

TEHRAN, IRAN. ON THE EVE OF THE *VERNAL EQUINOX.*

BEING WHAT YOU'D CALL A *NON-BELIEVER,* THE HOLIDAYS, TO *ME,* WERE ALWAYS MORE ABOUT SPENDING TIME WITH *FAMILY* THAN ANYTHING ELSE.

BUT AFTER MY DEATH, THEY LOST EVEN THAT MEANING.

SO THIS YEAR, I DITCHED THE PAINFUL *MEMORIES* AT HOME FOR THE FAR CORNERS OF THE WORLD. I'VE BEEN AT IT FOR A FEW MONTHS.

GUESS THERE ARE A FEW PERKS TO BEING THE SPECTRE'S HUMAN *HOST.* NO BORDERS. NO JET LAG.

AND APPARENTLY NO NEED FOR A FARSI TRANSLATOR. I *UNDERSTAND* WHAT EVERYONE AROUND ME IS TALKING ABOUT.

FROM THE RICH...

...TO THE POOR.

TOMORROW IS THE FIRST DAY OF SPRING. THE *PERSIAN NEW YEAR.*

THEY CALL IT *NOROUZ.* LITERALLY, "NEW DAY."

IT'S BEEN CELEBRATED FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. BEFORE ISLAM. BEFORE CHRISTIANITY...

... AND *DESPITE* MY RECENT FEELINGS TOWARD HOLIDAYS, I FIND MYSELF FASCINATED BY THE PROCEEDINGS.

MAMMA MINOO, WHY CAN'T I EAT THE APPLE?

BECAUSE WE NEED IT FOR THE *HAFT-SEEN* TABLE SETTING, DEAR.

THE CUSTOMS ENTIRELY NEW TO ME, YET ODDLY *FAMILIAR.*

WHAT FOR?

IT'S TRADITION. THE APPLE SYMBOLIZES HEALTH AND BEAUTY.

EWW, THEN WHAT'S THE VINEGAR FOR?

THAT SYMBOLIZES OLD AGE AND THE VIRTUE OF *PATIENCE.*

AND THE GARLIC?

Sigh HAVE ONE OF THE OLDER KIDS EXPLAIN THE REST TO YOU, DEAR. I'VE GOT LOTS OF CLEANING YET TO DO.

BUT WHAT ABOUT GOLDFISH? DON'T WE NEED SOME BY THE HAFT-SEEN?

YES, DEAR. AND PAPPA REZA IS GOING TO THE BAZAAR TO BUY SOME.

AND SMALL *PRESENTS* FOR THE KIDS.

BUT WE CAN'T AFFORD--

IT'S NOROUZ, REZA. *EVERY* CHILD DESERVES A GIFT ON NEW YEAR'S DAY. NOW GO.

HOUSECLEANING. DECORATIONS. PRESENTS. FAMILY.

WE'RE NOT AS *DIFFERENT* FROM EACH OTHER AS WE'D SOMETIMES LIKE TO THINK, WE HUMANS.

SALAAM. HALF A DOZEN GOLDFISH, PLEASE.

I'LL PICK THE BEST FOR YOU, SIR.

THANK YOU, AND HAPPY NOROUZ TO YOU.

MAY YOU HAVE A BLESSED NEW YEAR, SIR...

I'M SO CAUGHT UP IN THE NEW SIGHTS AND SOUNDS, I ALMOST FORGET THAT EVEN HALFWAY AROUND THE WORLD...

...CRIME NEVER SLEEPS.

WHAT'S THE HURRY, OLD MAN? LET US LIGHTEN YOUR LOAD.

N-NO, PLEASE. I HAVE NO MONEY.

NO MONEY, HUH? THEN WHERE DID *THESE* COME FROM?

THEY'RE FOR THE KIDS... AT THE ORPHANAGE. PLEASE, WE BARELY HAVE ENOUGH TO--

THWAK

SHUT UP.

WHUD

HURGH!

I LOOK ON, POWERLESS TO INTERVENE.

BRACING, *HOPING*, FOR THE SPECTRE TO ARRIVE AND PUNISH THESE *ANIMALS*.

BUT HE DOESN'T.

THAT'S *IT?* WHAT A WASTE OF TIME.

I DON'T KNOW HOW *LONG* I STOOD AND WATCHED AS HE GASPED FOR AIR THROUGH BRUISED LIPS AND PUNCTURED LUNGS.

THE ORPHANAGE!

...WHEN SUDDENLY I HAD A SICK, SINKING FEELING IN MY *GUT.*

EVENTUALLY, SOMEONE NOTICED HIS BODY IN THE ALLEY, HELPLESS AND MISSHAPEN LIKE A DISCARDED RAGDOLL.

I WAS ABOUT TO FOLLOW THEM TO THE HOSPITAL, TO MAKE SURE REZA WAS OK...

GOOD TO KNOW MY COP *INSTINCTS* DIDN'T DIE WITH ME.

...MUST HAVE GOTTEN *DONATIONS* FOR NOROUZ. SO WHERE'S THE *REST* OF THE MONEY?

I SWEAR, WE HAVE NO MORE...

LIAR!

WHACK

THE SPECTRE IS INDIFFERENT TO SUCH *PETTY* CRIMES, BUT... PERHAPS DUE TO THE SPIRIT OF THE DAY... I FEEL RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE PEOPLE.

SO I *PLEAD* MY CASE, UNTIL HE ACQUIESCES.

AND ALTHOUGH HE'S *RELUCTANT*, HE'S CERTAINLY NOT *RESTRAINED*...

RANSACK THE PLACE, THERE'S GOT TO BE *SOMETHING* WORTH TAKING.

MANSOOR PAYDAR...

HASSAN ALIZADEH...

...THE TIME HAS COME FOR YOU TO FACE *JUDGMENT.*

IT CAN'T BE!

M-MERCY...

THEY'VE PROBABLY NEVER EVEN *HEARD* OF THE SPECTRE BEFORE.

BUT WHEN THEY SEE ME, THEY *KNOW.*

DEEP IN THEIR DARK SOULS, THEY KNOW *WHAT* I AM.

I AM *THE SPECTRE.* I AM *THE WRATH OF GOD.*

ON THIS EVE OF A NEW YEAR, INSTEAD OF A *NEW BEGINNING,* YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO EMBRACE YOUR *OLD* EVIL WAYS.

AIIEEEE!

HUARRGGGH!

YOU HAVE VISITED *VIOLENCE* UPON THE CARETAKERS OF THIS PLACE, AND ROBBED THE ORPHANS OF WHAT MODEST *JOY* THEY WOULD HAVE EXPERIENCED ON THIS HOLIDAY.

SO NOW YOU SHALL BE ROBBED OF *YOUR LIVES* AS YOU KNOW THEM, NEVER TO HARM A SOUL AGAIN.

SEVERAL DAYS LATER, I WATCH AS REZA COMES HOME FROM THE HOSPITAL.

IT'LL BE *MONTHS* BEFORE HE AND HIS WIFE FULLY RECOVER, BUT AT LEAST THEY'RE *ALIVE.*

OR MAYBE, LIKE ME, THE SPECTRE WAS MOVED BY THE SPIRIT OF THE HOLIDAY TO LEAVE THE CHILDREN WITH A SMALL *GIFT.*

A FACT THAT IS *NOT* LOST ON THE CHILDREN.

I'M STILL NOT SURE HOW I *PERSUADED* THE SPECTRE TO INTERVENE.

SURE, *SOME* LIFE FORCE WAS ENDED THAT DAY IN THE ALLEY, THOUGH NOT HUMAN.

MAYBE THAT *TECHNICALITY* WAS ENOUGH TO SWAY HIM.

AT LEAST, THAT'S WHAT I'D LIKE TO *BELIEVE.*

END

METROPOLIS, THE 31ST CENTURY.

ALL IS QUIET ON HOLIDAY...

...ALMOST ALL.

THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES IN HOLIDAY

DAN ABNETT & ANDY LANNING • WRITERS
CHRIS BATISTA & RICK PERROTTA • ART
TRAVIS LANHAM • LETTERER
HI-FI • COLORIST
RACHEL GLUCKSTERN • ASSOCIATE EDITOR
MIKE CARLIN • EDITOR

COSMIC BOY

SCIENCE POLICE CONTROL, WE ARE EN ROUTE. HIGH SPEED INTERCEPT.

PLEASE CLEAR US FOR ASCENT THROUGH HIGH ALTITUDE TRAFFIC ZONES.

THANK YOU, LEGIONNAIRE, YOU ARE CLEARED FOR AIRSPACE ASCENT.

DAWNSTAR

WILDFIRE

NOTHING GONNA BE AROUND TODAY *ANYWAY*, COS. IT'S *HOLIDAY!*

AND WE *ALL* KNOW HOW MUCH YOU'D RATHER BE TAKING A DAY *OFF*, WILDFIRE.

YEAH, WELL, IF YOU'RE ROSTERED ON FOR HOLIDAY, *BAD LUCK*. I'LL GET OVER IT.

WHAT'S THE STORY, COS?

S.P. CONTROL JUST FLAGGED A POSSIBLE *TERRORIST ATTACK* ON THE DOCKING RING ON TOP OF THE METROPOLIS SPACE ELEVATOR.

NO ONE IN SIGHT.

WHAT PART OF "HOLIDAY" ARE YOU NOT GETTING, COS?

TRY THAT WAY.

LET ME JUST MOVE THOSE SHIPPING CRATES ASIDE TO SEE IF THEY'RE USING THEM FOR CONCEALMENT.

APPARENTLY NOT. IT MUST BE WAREHOUSING THEN.

WILDFIRE-- WE CAN'T WASTE ANY TIME.

CUT US AN ACCESS POINT.

YOU GOT IT!

WHAT THE *SPROCK!?* THESE GUYS AREN'T *TERRORISTS!*

HEY! WE WEREN'T DOIN' *NUTHIN'!*

APOLOGIES... FOR THE INTRUSION, *AND* THE HOLE IN THE WALL...

"...I THINK THIS IS WHAT'S KNOWN AS A *FALSE ALARM.*"

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE; MARS.

SHADOW LASS

JUST CAME OVER THE LINK...

...APPARENTLY COS, DAWNY AND WILDFIRE JUST SCARED THE *SPROCK* OUT OF A BUNCH OF LONGSHOREMEN HAVING A CUP OF GOOD CHEER.

RUINED *THEIR* HOLIDAY SPIRITS.

EMBARRASSING FOR THEM.

GAME FACES, S.P. CONTROL SAYS THERE COULD BE A *ROGUE KILL-BOT* LOOSE IN THIS DIG SITE.

POLAR BOY

REALLY? OR DO THEY MEAN THIS HARMLESS AUTO-FUNCTION *EXCAVATOR DROID?*

DON'T TELL ME WE JUST WASTED AN *INTERPLANETARY CALLOUT?*

CHAMELEON

OLD METROPOLIS STARGATE JUNCTION, METROPOLIS.

LIGHTNING LASS

UHM, S.P. CONTROL?

WE'RE IN THE JUNCTION CHAMBER. THERE'S NO SIGN OF ANY *ALIEN ATTACK...*

ELEMENT LAD

COLOSSAL BOY

"...ARE WE IN THE *RIGHT* PLACE?"

LEGION HQ.

PULLING MONITOR DUTY ON HOLIDAY IS *BAD* ENOUGH, BUT THESE FALSE ALARMS? *SERIOUSLY?*

I'M TRYING TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF IT! *PATIENCE!*

BRAINIAC 5

HOLIDAY IS *NOT* ABOUT RUSHING AROUND LIKE A HEADLESS *TURKOPOID!*

INDEED.

THAT'S WHY THE UNITED PLANETS COMBINED ALL OF THE CULTURAL, ETHNIC AND SEASONAL FESTIVALS OF OLDEN TIMES INTO THIS *ONE* DAY.

A DAY WHERE CITIZENS COULD PEACEFULLY CELEBRATE WITH THEIR FRIENDS.

IT'S ABOUT *FAMILY.* IT FEELS *WRONG* NOT CELEBRATING HOLIDAY ON WINATH WITH GARTH.

I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN. ON TALOK VIII, HOLDAY IS WHEN WE GATHER TO WELCOME THE WINTER DARK AND THE TIME OF SHADOWS.

WELL, ON BRAAL, HOLIDAY IS SHORT AND SWEET, INDUSTRY *NEVER* SLEEPS.

I'M READY TO DO MY DUTY *WHATEVER* THE TIME OF YEAR.

HOLIDAY IS AN *ILLOGICAL WHIMSY.* I DON'T KNOW WHY *ANYBODY* WOULD WANT A DAY OFF.

ANYWAY, I HAVE DETERMINED THAT THE FALSE ALARMS HAVE ONE THING IN *COMMON...*

SCIENCE POLICE CONTROL? *SERIOUSLY*, BRAINY?

IT'S THE ONLY POINT OF CONNECTION LINKING *ALL* THE ALERTS.

THERE'S NO ONE AROUND.

WE'VE BEEN NOTICING THAT A *LOT* TODAY. I WONDER *WHY...?*

YOU MAY *KEEP* YOUR SARCASM, WILDFIRE. S.P. CONTROL IS FULLY AUTOMATED, AS YOU WELL KNOW.

AND *FORCE FIELD* PROTECTED, APPARENTLY?

SHOULDN'T OUR FLIGHT RING CODES GIVE US *ACCESS* CLEARANCE?

IT'S AS THOUGH THE SITE WAS ON *SECURITY LOCKDOWN.*

I CAN REACH THE FORCE FIELD GENERATOR AND *DISABLE* IT.

NO, *WAIT!*

SKTZZZ

ZZZKKK,

YOU'VE SET OFF COUNTERMEASURE SYSTEMS!

WHOOPS!

ZZZZZKKK

ZZZZKKK

DISABLE THOSE SECURITY LASERS! FAST, BEFORE SOMEONE GETS COOKED!

ON IT!

GET THAT VAULT DOOR!

WHICH IS NOW NOT SO MUCH ARMORED STEEL AS QUITE BRITTLE QUARTZ!

THANKS...

...I'LL KNOCK, SHALL I?

WE'RE *IN!* THIS IS THE CONTROL MAINFRAME.

OH, *THIS* ISN'T GOOD.

BRAINY?

THE *ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE* RUNNING SCIENCE POLICE CONTROL IS A CLOUD OF *NANO-MIST PARTICLES.*

IT'S *MALFUNCTIONING*...JUST PRODUCING *GIBBERISH.*

THE A.I. *NEVER* RESTS. *NEVER* SLEEPS. IT OPERATES TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK AND HAS DONE SINCE *ACTIVATION.*

DECADES OF *TINY ERRORS* HAVE INCREMENTALLY MULTIPLIED TO THE POINT WHERE IT IS IN DANGER OF *TOTAL CORTEX FAILURE.*

WHAT ABOUT THE FALSE ALARMS? THE EMERGENCY CALL-OUTS?

A CRY FOR *HELP,* I BELIEVE.

UNABLE TO COMMUNICATE ITS *OWN* PROBLEMS DUE TO SYSTEM CORRUPTION, IT WAS GENERATING FAKE EMERGENCIES IN THE HOPE THAT *SOMEONE* WOULD *NOTICE* ITS PLIGHT.

OKAY, BUT CAN YOU *FIX* IT?

GREATER METROPOLIS IS GOING TO GO *VERY* DARK WITHOUT SCIENCE POLICE OVERWATCH.

WELL, I CAN SWITCH IT *OFF.*

BRAINIAC!

KLK

KLK

CALM DOWN.

SWITCHING IT OFF ALLOWED IT TO REBOOT AND *SELF-REPAIR* ITS SYSTEMS.

BASICALLY, I GAVE IT A WELL-EARNED *HOLIDAY.*

IF *ONLY* FOR A *SPLIT SECOND.*

I WISH I COULD HAVE GIVEN YOU *GREATER RESPITE.*

IT WAS *WONDERFUL!* THE LONGEST BREAK I'VE HAD IN *THREE CENTURIES!*

I FEEL REFRESHED ENOUGH TO FACE ANOTHER *THOUSAND YEARS!*

WELL, I'LL BUILD AN *ANNUAL ONE SECOND REST* INTO YOUR PROTOCOLS, JUST TO BE SAFE.

LIGHTNING LAD

SATURN GIRL

ULTRA BOY

INVISIBLE KID

SUN BOY

PHANTOM GIRL

GATES

TIMBER WOLF

WE HEARD THERE WAS A MAJOR EMERGENCY AND BREAK-IN AT S.P. CONTROL!

WE'VE GATED IN EVERY *RESERVE* AND *OFF-DUTY MEMBER!*

RELAX, EVERYTHING'S *FINE.*

LOOKS LIKE WE'LL BE SPENDING HOLIDAY WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY *AFTER ALL.*

HAPPY HOLIDAY, BRAINY!

AND HAPPY HOLIDAYS, WHEREVER... *WHENEVER* YOU ARE, FROM THE *DC UNIVERSE!*